



New Morning Market

March 15, 2013

Public Health Committee

RE: HB 6519

My name is John Pittari. I am testifying as an owner of an independent grocery store, specifically New Morning Market in Woodbury. I am also a husband, father and grandfather. I have operated New Morning for more than 35 years and over the last 3 decades I have seen many changes in the food industry. I feel the most critically challenging issue that faces the food industry today is the use of genetically engineered crops in our food.

New Morning Market is a natural & organic food store. We have recently built a 14,000 sq ft storefront and have been operating in our new location since May, 2012. New Morning's customers are very diverse – from all walks of life. They are teenagers, retirees, young families, empty nesters, and are from all trades and professions, in fact, many of our customers are very influential in their fields. I'm very proud that our customers are independent, critical thinkers that care and want to make a difference in the world.

As any good retailer, I strive to meet my customers' needs and exceed their expectations. I can unequivocally say that the majority of my customers are asking for information and guidance on foods that may contain genetically modified organisms (GMO's). In fact, it is a daily topic of discussion with my customers.

The Non-GMO Project is the only third party verification for Non-GMO food and products. The Non-GMO Project verification label is the only clear and straightforward assurance that I can give to my customers that a product has been produced using the best practices to keep GMOs out of their products.

My customers are very happy to have the Non-GMO Project label to guide them. It's not just my customer, but all throughout the country consumers have been voting with their dollars and the sales for products with the Non-GMO verified label have increased 108% from 2011 to 2012 (\$1.3B to \$2.7B). In my opinion, this is a fine example of free market forces at work.

Unfortunately, it is also creating consumer confusion. Customers are beginning to assume that if a product doesn't carry the Non-GMO Verified label, it is a product to avoid. This is creating an uneven playing field, which is forcing producers who are not using GMO ingredients to have their products verified and labeled so consumers won't assume their products have something to hide.

I implore you to support HB 6519 and err on the side of caution and to trust that the citizens of CT are intelligent enough to make the decision to consume GMO's on their own and not allow the FDA preempt their choice.